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ABSTRACT

This document is the sixth in a series of 12 early childhood program descriptions compiled by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. The program described here is the Interdependent Learning Model located at the Institute for Developmental Studies at New York University in New York City. The Interdependent Learning Model is designed to help low-income children in kindergarten through third grade Follow Through classes acquire learning skills, especially social and communication skills. The basic feature of the model is the Transactional Instructional Games which can be adapted for use with any curriculum or standard text. Included in the program description are brief outlines of: (1) goals and objectives, (2) content and materials, (3) classroom activities, (4) parent involvement, (5) professional and paraprofessional training, (6) administrative requirements and costs, (7) program development and evaluation, and (8) program history and present (1971) status. (JMB)

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Early Childhood
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Program Summary

THE INTERDEPENDENT LEARNING MODEL

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Goals and Objectives

The Interdependent Learning Model is designed for children in K-3 Follow Through classes. The goals of the model are to help children from low-income families acquire learning skills, especially social and communication (language) skills, that the developers believe would offer them more alternatives in their lives. The program's main concern is not to identify specific lesson objectives, since their model can be molded to meet any kind of lesson plan; but to design a structure for facilitating group interaction and developing individual and group independence.

The developers believe that social and cognitive skills should be built in as part of the curriculum and that if students are to become successful learners, they must be given an increased voice in their learning situation by controlling their own groups, activities and scheduling. They believe that the small-group game format is ideal for developing cognitive, problem-solving and communication skills since a) children like to play games, b) instructional games provide learning sequences in graduated steps c) game rules provide a pattern for interaction, and d) language is an integral part of play.

Content and Materials

The basic feature of the model is the use of "Transactional Instructional Games" ... transactional because they require social and verbal transactions among students. The Interdependent Learning Model can theoretically operate within any curriculum or standard text by adapting them to the Instructional Game format. Games are usually "table type" involving boards, blocks, dice, or cards; pantomime games are also used. Most of the game materials are teacher made, based on prototypes developed by the developers. However, teachers are encouraged to make up their own games. Concentration is a typical game format that teachers can adapt to the curriculum. Commercially available games produced by the developers include Language Lotto and Matrix games. In addition to a list of suggested games the developer provides teacher guides in three curriculum areas. They are reading (Direct Approach to Decoding); communications (ENACTED), and a series of games designed to teach math skills. The Direct Approach to Decoding Program (D.A.D.) is a decoding approach that can be integrated with most reading programs. According to its authors, the program teaches basic phonics skills through teaching letter sounds, auditory blending and phonic analysis. When the child has mastered these phonics skills, he applies them to decoding, combining phonic analysis and blending, sight-word recognition, reading and generalized word-attack. The program is detailed and

highly structured to enable teachers to better understand the components of reading, but the teacher can develop new games (with the help of program consultants) to supplement the guide. The teacher may also integrate the D.A.D. program with basal reader.

The ENACTED communication guide uses a creative dramatics approach. The program stresses affective and cognitive development; the child should form knowledge of human behavior leading to the ability to monitor and modify his responses. The guide begins with nonverbal communication (kinesics) and moves to role playing in hypothetical situations. Like the D.A.D. program, the ENACTED curriculum uses a teacher-directed, structured, and sequential approach; teachers are provided detailed lesson plans and game suggestions.

A 600-page math manual offers suggested games that can be used with any math curriculum. If a teacher already knows what the objectives for his math curriculum are to be, he can go to the manual and find games to reinforce the lessons. An experienced teacher can use the manual as the basis of a kindergarten through third grade math program. The developers are completing a fourth program (EMERGENT) which will be available in fall 1972. (This program appears in the section heading "Present Status.")

Classroom Activities

In the classroom, learning occurs in independent, small-group game activities. These activities are structured by the games' own rules rather than by teacher edict, so that the children may develop social and learning interaction among themselves, direct their own learning, and develop initiative and autonomy.

The teacher has two instructional functions: he tries to promote a group's ability to play games autonomously without his intervention; he instructs directly in the decoding and ENACTED (role play) curricula and in other subject areas in order to get initial skills across to the students. How this is done depends on the teacher's instructional methods. Generally, though, after the teacher has introduced main ideas, the students are divided into small groups in which the teacher introduces the game by participating initially as a member of the group. The games are then turned over to the children to play on their own (though the teacher or assistant may occasionally intervene or introduce new content). Sometimes the group can be organized with individuals who are at different levels of competence, with the more advanced being able to help those who need it. It is hoped that with increased sophistication children

will be able to form their own groups, plan what they wish to accomplish, choose their own preferred activities, and keep records of what they have done.

A game frequently used is Concentration. A teacher can use it in several ways. For example, the teacher makes 52 brightly colored cards with each letter of the alphabet colored on two cards--forming 26 pairs. The children mix up the cards and place them face down, each on a different square on the playing board. The object of the game is to get two cards that match. If a child gets a match he keeps the cards, if not he turns the cards back over and lets the next player have a turn. Each child has to say what letter he turned over: "I got a W." If he doesn't know what the letter is, the child can ask someone to help him.

Program staff are currently developing and refining tests or checklists to help measure student progress. One kind of evaluation instrument under development is an observational checklist where language behavior, game behavior, and teacher behavior can be recorded and assessed. At the present, there are three such checklists being used: decoding checklists given weekly, D.A.D. Reading Criterion Test given at the end of the year, and Matrix games checklist. Standardized tests are given twice a year but this is more a requirement of the school or district rather than a part of the model. Available in December 1971 will be a Math Checklist in which the developers have listed all the major objectives for math and a test to measure each of the objectives. In addition, a Math Diagnostic Test for grades K-5 will be available in December 1971.

Parent Involvement

Paid parent workers (or family workers), provided for under Follow Through guidelines, are used to teach the games approach to parent groups. They primarily serve as an information resource. They also help make classroom materials, such as instructional games, serve as teaching aids in the classroom. Parent volunteers are also encouraged to help make games and to work in the classroom as aides.

Professional and Paraprofessional Training

Teachers and aides are trained in the same way. The training is conducted in small groups. The developers want the teachers to develop the same sense of control over their learning as they want the

students to achieve. Once a technique has been demonstrated by the training staff, the teachers and aides are organized into small groups to discuss and/or practice the new technique. In this way the teacher understands the nature of learning through group interaction. The developers train a core of school personnel who are to help teachers with problems, and to carry on training sessions when the staff consultants are not present. There is no standardized approach to training. Topics for training sessions depend on the sites and the needs of trainees. Preservice training is held before the beginning of the school year, where emphasis is placed on the teacher's role in the classroom, in creating and evaluating games, and in planning and carrying out changes in the classroom. On-site workshops are held four to five days a month. Teachers and aides work together discussing problems, making new games, exchanging ideas with other groups. Consultants in reading, math, drama, etc. are also available to individual schools.

Administrative Requirements and Costs

The only requirement the developers have when they enter a classroom is that the classroom be equipped with tables and chairs, rather than desks, and with adequate movable shelving which can be used as storage and room dividers. Each movable shelving unit can cost a school \$50 to \$100. The only required materials are the Language Lorto and the Matrix games developed by Lassar Gotkin. These are available from Appleton-Century-Croft and cost \$40 to \$50 a set. For \$70 per child a school can receive the Direct Approach to Decoding (D.A.D.) teacher's guide, ENACTED Communications teacher's guide, the mathematics game manual, and consultant services. This is not a set fee. The cost depends on the number of classrooms using their materials. Consultant services are available to any school at a fee that is worked out between the developers and the staff. The teachers may also wish to purchase commercially available games. The developers estimate that the yearly purchase could vary from \$1 to \$30.

The model can work in classrooms where there is only one teacher. However, the developers recommend use of teaching aides or a team teaching approach.

Program Development and Evaluation

Eleven hundred Atlanta Follow Through students (K-3) are involved in a longitudinal study started in September 1969. Metropolitan Readiness or Achievement Tests are administered in pre- and posttest settings.

Results show significant gains at kindergarten and grade one; at grades two and three scores were "no better or lower" than at comparison schools. Results of developer's checklist testing are unavailable at present. The developers are in the process of developing a comprehensive observation checklist to be used in Spring 1972. The January 23, 1971 issue of the Christian Science Monitor reports that in one Atlanta school using the model children's readiness test scores improved dramatically. Whereas no pupils ranked "superior" before using the model, 5% did so after the model had been operating a year. Twenty-six percent compared to 68% of students in the previous year were in the "low normal" category.

The Stanford Research Institute has been given an evaluation contract by the U.S. Office of Education to evaluate all Follow Through programs including the Interdependent Model. A report from S.R.I. will be available by February 1972.

Program History and Present Status

This program evolved out of Lassar Gotkin's work at the Institute for Developmental Studies. He was interested in developing a game format for learning. In 1966 the focus changed to include designing a model that would make the children independent learners relying less on the teacher. The program was then called the Independent Learner's Model.

This Follow Through Model is implemented in New York City, Atlanta, Georgia, and Lansing, Michigan. A new communications curriculum, which will be called EMERGENT Communications, will be available in fall 1972. It will be a series of communication games. A simple game task might be one where one child holds a design made of various colors. He is to tell the other student how to construct the same design just from his description. The staff also plan to put together a science curriculum. They are looking for funds, separate from Follow Through, to design a program titled Curriculum for the Future. It would be a program looking at the kinds of requirements for living in a rapidly changing society.